DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 459 655 HE 034 546

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TITLE	Narrated Voices of African American Women in Academe.
PUB DATE	2001-11-15
NOTE	46p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Association for the Study of Higher Education (25th, Richmond, VA, November 15-18, 2001).
PUB TYPE	Reports - Research (143) -- Speeches/Meeting Papers (150)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Administrators; Attitudes; *Blacks; *College Faculty; *Experience; *Females; *Gender Issues; Higher Education; Personal Narratives; *Racial Discrimination
IDENTIFIERS	*African Americans

ABSTRACT

This study was conducted to investigate the academic experiences of selected African American women faculty and administrators employed by two-year and four-year predominantly white institutions. The sample selection was purposeful, and three faculty members and two administrators agreed to participate. Each participant was interviewed on five separate occasions using an open-ended interview guide. Data analysis followed the standard inductive coding procedures articulated by Y. Lincoln and E. Guba (1985), and the constant comparative method (A. Strauss and J. Corbin, 1990) was used to generate theory in the study. The narratives of the participants provide insight into the academic experiences of other black female faculty and administrators, but should not be interpreted as representing the experiences of all black women in academia. Race appears to be the environmental landscape of the academic experiences of these women. The influence of social class is not as easily discernable as that of race, but it was present and contributed to the shaping of their academic experiences. Gender was an issue, especially since some of these women were aware that they had been hired to add minority and female participation to an academic department and that they represented two-for-one for department administrators. Race, class, and gender operated independently and collectively to shape and influence the academic experiences of the women in this study. (Contains 50 references.) (SLD)

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Narrated Voices of African American Women in Academe

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Research Paper Presentation
25th Conference of the Association for the Study of Higher Education, Richmond, VA
Thursday, November 15, 2001

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NARRATED VOCIES OF AFRICAN AMERICAN WOMEN IN ACADEME

Sharon L. Holmes

INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE

The literature is becoming replete with studies that address the issue of sexism in the lives of women seeking full participation in the academy (Aguirre, 2000; Finkel, Olswang, & She, 1994; LeBlanc, 1993; Sandler, 1993). Volumes upon volumes record the injustices and frustration women have faced in higher education. There have been numerous reports of wage inequities, vague publishing expectations, ambiguous tenure requirements, limited access to certain academic disciplines, lack of mentorship and networking opportunities, and exclusion from strategic decision-making positions (Burgess, 1997; Exum, Menges, Watkins, & Berglund, 1984; Finkel, et al., 1994; Warner & DeFleur, 1993). In much of this research, women are classified as a singular group not taking into consideration the impact that race may contribute to any one of these variables if the whole group were broken down into separate ethnic groups and investigated. For instance, based upon the long and turbulent history of race relations and class distinctions made in the United States, a person would be remiss to assume historical ideologies (inferior vs. superior) created by a White male patriarchal system have no bearing on the experiences of African American and other women of color in higher education today (Amott & Matthaei, 1996; Wilkerson, 1989). This is not to imply that White female academicians have not suffered because of the system in existence; rather, it simply infers that because of their ethnicity, their academic experiences have not been shaped in the same way by the intersections of race, class, and gender as have those of women of color. It is precisely these overlapping sociocultural factors (e.g., race, class, gender) that require an examination of the experiences of

African American women to be placed within the proper social and political contexts in which their realities are constructed (Collins, 1990).

A number of studies have attempted to explain the status of African American women in higher education. However, what generally occurs in many of these studies is that the experiences of Black women are compared to those of other women, usually White women, to verify whether or not they/we are meeting some arbitrary standard of normalcy in the academy (Collins, 1990; Miller & Vaughn, 1997). Naturally, these findings will explain the experiences of some African American women in higher education. However, they are limited in their analysis because they do not take into account the historical nature of race, class, and gender in shaping the roles of African American women in society in general and in higher education more specifically (Collins, 1990; Gregory, 1995). Furthermore, these studies do not reveal how African American women interpret their experiences in predominantly white institutions, nor do they allow the women to discuss how issues related to race, class, and gender affect their overall academic citizenship. They are also limited in their representation because they fail to consider the variation in responses that will be obtained from any two Black women as a result of individual differences and personal experiences set within a cultural context (Collins, 1990; Hurtado et al., 1999). Which will ultimately influence how we manage and respond to the interactions we have in our academic roles (Holmes, 1999).

The purpose of this paper is to present findings of a study conducted to investigate the academic experiences of selected African American women faculty and administrators employed by two- and four-year predominantly white institutions. I started this line of inquiry as a graduate student attending a large predominantly white institution located in what is fondly referred to by some as "The Heartland of America." As an African American woman, I became

concerned about the small number of African American women faculty and administrators I encountered during my graduate program. I was equally concerned about the lack of literature I could find regarding Black women in the academy when writing class papers, as well as the substance of available literature. I was particularly interested in examining the women's experiences within the context of race, class, and gender because extant literature suggests that these constructs shape the academic roles of African American people in higher education (Collins, 1990; Thompson & Dey, 1998; Turner, Myers, Creswell, 1999; Miller, & Vaughn, 1997). My overall goal in the study was to place the women's experiences at the center of analysis and allow them to assist me in interpreting their experiences in predominantly white institutions (Collins, 1990; Etter-Lewis, 1993).

OVERVIEW OF AFRICAN AMERICAN WOMEN COMPARED TO OTHER MEMBERS OF THE ACADEMY

Historically, only a select number of African American women were permitted on the campuses of white colleges and universities as faculty and administrative staff (Fleming, Gill, & Swinton, 1978). Today, while the numbers have increased in all areas and levels of the academy, there is still a low representation of Black women in faculty and administrative positions when compared to other groups in higher education (Collins, 1990; Turner, et al., 1999).

One far-reaching belief held by many people during the period of the early nondiscrimination mandates was that large numbers of African American women were being hired by white colleges and universities because they helped the institution fulfill the federal government's affirmative action requirements. Anderson & Sullivan (1997) contended that many believed that because "African American women [belonged] to two protective classes, i.e. race and gender, ...it was advantageous for institutions to hire these women to push up their affirmative action numbers" (p. 2). If this assumption is true, current data should verify that there are substantial

numbers of African American women in higher education today who entered during this so-called period of "two-for-the price-of-one." However, it is as Anderson and Sullivan (1997) stated, "a look at the data dispels that notion" (p. 2).

The U. S. Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics is considered one of the leading sources of available data examining current trends in faculty participation in higher education. Nettles and Perna (1997) using the Center's data bases conducted a study entitled the 1992/93 National Study of Postsecondary Faculty (NSOPF: 93). The study represents a national sample of faculty and instructional staff employed by public and private not-for-profit colleges and universities as of the fall of 1992, and consist of data collected from 25,780 of the 31,354 faculty and 872 of the 974 institutions contacted. The results can be used to illustrate how African American women faculty compare to White males and White females in higher education.

According to Nettles and Perna, African American (non-Hispanic) women represented only 2.4% (14,692) of the total 605,224 teaching faculty employed by institutions of higher education as of fall 1992, as opposed to 34.4% (208,372) for White women, and for White men and 54.7% (330,911). What does this figure mean when compared to the total U.S. population of 270, 299,000 people? Simply stated, this means you would have to increase the number of African American females teaching college by a factor of almost 3 to have equal representation in the total U.S. population. Thus, these comparisons indicate that African American women are underrepresented in faculty teaching positions. The data also indicate that African American women hold only 2.6% (8,266) of the total 317,60 regular, full-time teaching positions, when compared to White men who hold 59% (187,430) and White women 29.8% (94,725).

At the academic rank, African American women still fare no better. Full professors constitute 101,967 (32.1%) of the total 317,610 regular full-time professors in academe as of fall 1992. African American women represent a mere 1410 (1.4%) of the total tenured regular, full-time full professors (101, 967) as of fall 1992. White men account for 76,386 (74.9%) and White women 15,189 (14.9%). If you compare the percentage of Black and White women full professors with White men, gender inequities could explain why there is such a significant difference at the full professor rank. However, when the two groups are separated, (i.e., Black and White women) other factors may contribute to the disparity in the number of African American women regular, full-time full professors when compared to White women at the same rank.

Because African American women rank lowest as regular, full-time faculty when compared to White faculty, it stands to reason that the rate at which they become tenured faculty would lag behind as well. As of fall, 1992 there were 190,031 tenured faculty (all academic ranks) of the total 317,610 regular full-time professors in academe. African American women represented 3545 (1.86%) of the total tenured faculty (190,031). White men represented 128,316 (67.5%) and White women 41,371 (21.8%) of the total tenured faculty (190,031) for the same period.

The numbers start to improve slightly for African American women at the tenure-track level. African American women represent 4.3% (2,866) of the total 67,037 faculty on line for tenure as of fall 1992 versus 47.5% (31,838) for White men, and (39%) 26,171 for White women.

The college presidency is viewed as the pinnacle of academic administration and can serve as a benchmark of status for women administrators in higher education (Anderson & Sullivan, 1997; Wilson, 1989). As of fall 1988 women of color represented 38 (1.3%) of the 296 presidents in higher education. They serve at all types of institutions; however, the majority of

women are concentrated at community colleges. Furthermore, Wilson's (1989) research on the progress, trends, and barriers of women in academic administrative positions revealed that "black women fare better as presidents of majority white institutions than as presidents of historically black colleges" (p. 89). As of the writing of this paper, there were 25 African American female presidents of four-year colleges and universities in the country. The number diminishes significantly when major research institutions are considered independently. Among institutions formerly classified by Carnegie as holding Research I or II distinction, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute in Troy, New York became the first to appoint a Black female when Dr. Shirley Ann Jackson became the institution's president in 1999 (Collison, 1999). The appointment marked a significant gain for both African Americans and Black women because Dr. Jackson is one of four African Americans and the only Black female to hold a presidency at a major institution. She is also one of two women of color in the country to ever hold a senior-level administrative post at a major research institution (Anderson & Sullivan, 1997; Collison, 1999). In the immediate past, Condolezza Rice had been the only other female woman of color to hold such a high-ranking position when she was appointed provost at Stanford University in 1993. She served as the chief academic and budget officer of the university for six years before stepping down on July 1, 1999 to pursue other interest (Anderson & Sullivan, 1997).

Current Knowledge Producers of Research on Black Women in Higher Education

Extensive literature reviews were conducted to frame the discussion for this overview. Yet, relatively speaking, a very limited body of research was available on the experiences of African American women faculty and administrators. Most of the readings were anecdotal synopsis as opposed to theoretically grounded documents.

The majority of the literature dates from the mid-1970s to the early 1980s, and it appears that

the primary focus of most of the inquiry was directed at understanding the academic experiences of Black males in white colleges and universities. Mosley (1980), attempting to study the plight of the Black female administrators, indicated she found "little or no information" and concluded that "the most authoritative source [i.g., producers of literature] would be Black female administrators themselves" (p. 296). Her words were prophetic because the majority of literature available today examining the experiences of African American women in higher education has been produced by other Black female researchers.

The limited amount of literature concerning African American women faculty and administrators comes as no surprise when one considers that White males have been in control of the validation and distribution of what is considered "good" scholarship since the inception of higher education in America (Aguirre, 2000; Collins, 1990). In many ways, the white male's control of scholarship production has contributed to the problem that some African American women have experienced in higher education regarding publications for promotion and tenure (Kawewe, 1997).

Collins (1990) speaking on the paucity of Black women's participation in knowledge creation stated that "educated elites typically claim that only they are qualified to produce theory and believe that only they can interpret not only their own but everyone's else's experiences. Moreover, educated elites often use this belief to uphold their own privilege" (p. xii). She said "Black women's exclusion from positions of power within mainstream institutions has led to the elevation of elite white male ideas and interests and the corresponding suppression of Black women's ideas and interests in traditional scholarship and popular culture" (p. 7).

RESEARCH METHODS

Few would argue that the research questions guiding an investigation as well as the

researcher's philosophical and epistemological assumptions are central to the selection of a research design (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). One of my primary beliefs' is that whatever meaning people ascribe to their experiences is their reality. I also believe that a person's reality is constructed within a socio-political context and that in order to understand the meaning of the experience, as well as the value attached to it the person must participate in the interpretation of the experience. For these reasons, I chose qualitative research as the methodological approach in the study because these underlying assumptions are inherent within this research design.

Theoretical Considerations

There was a period in history when educators and scholars alike advanced the notion that women lived similar experiences because of their gendered natures (Bing & Reid, 1996; Chodorow, 1978; Gilligan, 1982). Thus, theoretical frameworks used to interpret the female experience posited an all-inclusive norm, which purported to represent their social agency regardless of ethnicity or culture heritage (Collins, 1990). In some of this research, experiences of Black women were perceived as abnormal because the social, economic, and political contexts of their/our lives did not accede to "normative" models being promulgated in mainstream journals and the popular press (Bing & Reid, 1996; Collins, 1990). For instance, it was alleged that the Black woman's contribution to the family structure was detrimental to its success and that she was responsible for their high unemployment rate, declining marital relations, and accelerating dependency on social institutions for subsistence (Moynihan, 1965). Bing& Reid (1996) contends, "few researchers explored the strengths or the normative practices of African American women. In fact, many found ways to turn those strengths into weaknesses" (p.184). As a result of these persuasive arguments, the experiences and contributions of Black women in higher education specifically, and society in general were often trivialized and/or overlooked

altogether. Holmes (1999) speaking to these concerns found that an understanding of the sociocultural factors that influence the construction of Black female identity coupled with a knowledge of the environmental contexts in which development occurs is the precursor to understanding the experiences of African American women within any given context.

These considerations were present in my mind as I began this project. Furthermore, as a Black female, I understood, and needed to acknowledge that African American women occupy a unique location in society, which means that at times we are confronted by various social issues and political concerns that are not shared by white women and men, or black men. To the extent theoretical orientations predicated on mainstream thought would not be sufficient to provide even tentative suppositions regarding the interpretations of our lives. I selected black feminist thought and its evolving epistemology (Collins, 1990; Dill, 1994; Giddings, 1984; hooks, 1984; Ilhe, 1992; Lerner, 1981; Etter-Lewis, 1993, 1997; Moses, 1997; Mulqueen, 1992) as the theoretical framework for this study because it recognizes the complicated realities that comprise the everyday experiences of Black females.

Collins (1990) one of the chief proponents of black feminist thought developed a five dimensional framework that takes into consideration the overlapping social and political oppressions that African American women encounter as a result of sociocultural factors that construct a Black woman's life. Characteristics of black feminist thought include: (1) the core themes of a Black woman's standpoint, (2) variation of responses to core themes, (3) the interdependence of experience and consciousness, (4) consciousness and the struggle for self-defined standpoint, and (5) the interdependence of thought and action. In this study, the first three dimensions are used as the theoretical lens to view the women's experiences.

The first dimension recognizes the commonality of experiences that all African American

women share as a result of living in a society that devalues Black female identity. A core theme of this dimension is a legacy of struggle that Black women are subjected to as we attempt to maneuver in a racist and male-dominated society. Struggles in the academy may include combating racism, sexism, and negative imagines that are binding and oppressive, in addition to fighting to gain respect as scholars and intellectuals. The second dimension illustrates the variation in responses to core themes that Black women will have based on individual, environmental and social perspectives. It refutes the notion that a collected Black female experience exists, and recognizes that reactions (e.g., responses to struggle) are predicated on a variety of individualized factors. The third dimension posits that as a group all African American women may share common experiences as a result of living in a racist and patriarchal society, however, it should not be assumed that a collective consciousness exists among all women or is articulated as such by group members. This is largely because while all may be Black and female, each woman will have a predisposition predicated on her own level of consciousness and experience.

Selection of Participants

The sample selection was purposeful due to the nature of the study (Patton, 1990). Ten women representing varied academic disciplines and administrative positions were invited to participate in the study. Of the five that agreed, three were faculty members and two were administrators. Women were selected based on the following criteria: (a) they identified themselves as a African American female faculty or administrator employed by a two- and four-year predominantly White institution; (b) employed by their institution for at least three years; and (c) represented varied departments or academic disciplines. Below is a descriptive outline of each of the women who participated in the study. All names are pseudonyms.

Overview of the Women

All of the participants in the study identified as were African American women; their ages spanned the decades between 30 and 60. Iman was 32, Terah was 36, Juanita was 40 years old, Annette was in her 50s, and Nakia was in her 60s. The older the woman was, the less likely she was to give her exact age. All of them were from two-parent households whether it was a stepparent and a biological parent or both the biological mother and father. Iman, Juanita, and Nakia grew up in predominantly White communities, and Terah and Annette grew up in predominantly Black neighborhoods, but had a fair amount of interaction with the larger surrounding White community during adolescence. Terah, Juanita, Annette, and Nakia were married and Terah was single. The married women spoke very positively of their relationships with their spouses, enjoyed family life, and felt their families supported their career decisions. Terah spoke often of how she missed having a significant other in her life and attributed her singleness largely to working and living in a predominantly White environment. The married women were parents of either school-age children or grown adults, and the Nakia was a grandmother. Terah, Juanita, and Nakia were first-generation college students, and Iman and Annette were second and third, respectively. Annette was the only woman in the group who had ever attended a historically Black institution; all of the others had received their Master's degree, or both the Master's and Ph.D. from a predominantly White institution. Three of the women were employed by the same predominantly white institution where they had received their Ph.D. degrees, and the other two had both attended the same predominantly White institution for their Master's degrees, and were now working at the same community college. Terah and Juanita had performed some type of professional service at their current institutions prior to employment, and at least four of them had been strongly encouraged to apply or recruited directly for the positions they now hold.

Data Collection

Each participant was interviewed on five separate occasions. The first interview lasted approximately 90 minutes and there were four subsequent interviews of 60 minutes each. An open-ended interview guide was used, but deviations were allowed to explore questions and others issues raised by the participants that I felt were useful to the study (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). In the first interview we discussed the nature of the study again, and the participants' family background. In the second interview, I asked the participants to clarify parts of the data set from the first interview about which I was unclear, and then we proceeded to questions related to the participants and family members educational background. In the third interview I again clarified sections of the data, and we discussed emergent themes in her data set. After this, we discussed employment questions. In the fourth interview, emergent themes were discussed, and participants were given an opportunity to read and comment on their personal profiles. We also continued to discuss her employment experience. The fifth interview was used for member checking. In some cases I was asked to delete text that they felt to be too revealing, or they helped clarify incidents for me.

All of the interviews were tape-recorded, then transcribed verbatim for use in the data analysis process. During the course of interviewing I kept a journal to record of my thoughts and feelings, and observations of the participants. I incorporated these notes into the interpretation of the data.

Data Analysis and Coding

Data analysis followed the standard inductive coding procedures articulated by (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). I used the constant comparative method to generate theory in the study (Strauss and Corbin, 1990). I started the analysis by reading over each of the participant's interview

transcripts just to familiarize myself with the data. The second time I read the transcripts I started the coding. Data analysis and coding occurred in a circular motion, and I used the four-stage method suggested by Strauss and Corbin (1990): (1) comparing incidents applicable to each category; (2) integrating categories and their properties; (3) delimiting the theory; and (4) writing the theory.

Furthermore, Guba and Lincoln (1982) have suggested several procedures to ensure the trustworthiness of a qualitative research design: (1) creditability; (2) dependability, (3) triangulation; (4) confirmability; and (5) transferability. To ensure the creditability of the findings, I consulted with the participants throughout the interview process to verify that my understanding of their experiences was actually how they perceived the experience to be, or that it captured what they had told me. One expert in qualitative research methodology read the transcripts along with me and offered suggestions to help me re-think how I had categorized and/or coded themes. Professional colleagues who were knowledgeable of the subject matter were enlisted to read and comment on sections of the coded transcripts (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992). I also used a variety of data sources in an attempt to understand the women's experiences (Janesick, 1994). In this study, I conducted one-on-one interviews, observed the women during meetings, reviewed relevant literature, and solicited documents from the women regarding their institutions' policies and procedures and promotion and tenure requirements. To address the issue of dependability and confirmability, I established an audit trail inclusive of field-notes, interview tapes, coding procedures, an explanation of how themes were developed and assigned, a journal of my personal thoughts about the research process, the research proposal, and a written case study of my findings. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), transferability is contingent upon the degree to which the researcher supplies the reader and/or subsequent researcher(s) with

enough contextual data (i.e., thick description [see Geertz, 1973]) whereby it would allow someone else to replicate the study in a similar environment. Adhering to this, I have attempted to provide as much information as possible about the participants and their institutions without comprising their confidentiality that would allow someone to further this research.

INTERVIEW FINDINGS

The academic experiences of each of the women in the study was different, yet there were several themes that emerged during data analysis that provide an understanding of how sociocultural factors impact their academic roles. I should mention that each category will not represent each woman in the study. Strauss and Corbin (1990) contend that "occasionally one comes across a prototypical case, one that fits the pattern exactly. However, usually there isn't a perfect fit. One tries to place cases in the most appropriate context, using criteria of best rather than exact fit" (p. 139). As such, in the categories presented below, where appropriate, narrative text is used to illustrate how sociocultural factors influenced the women's academic experiences. You should also be aware that two institutional types are being discussed here. Nakia and Terah are employed by a two-year comprehensive community college, and Annette, Juanita, and Iman are employed by large a Research I university.

Race Matters

A number of African American women who were hired through affirmative action mandates were often considered "token Blacks" in their institutions and did not gain full acceptance and participation rights similar to members of the broader White academy community (Fleming, et al., 1978; Moses, 1997; Washington & Harvey, 1989). I asked Annette if she knew at the beginning of her employment that she was a targeted hire, and she indicated that she did not. She did not understand the implications of her employment status at her institution until much later.

The words capitalized are used to capture the emphasis Annette placed on certain words when she described her understanding of her employment status at her university.

> I really was not aware that there were hidden agendas when I first went to my institution. I had a true love for my university every since I was a child, and I thought they meant me well. But I truly believe they took advantage of me. I HAD TO BE AN AFRICAN AMERICAN. I HAD TO BE AN ETHNIC MINORITY. I WAS A FEDERAL DOCUMENTATION, AND ONCE I SATISFIED THAT, I JUST BECAME A QUOTA FOR THEM. I don't want to give you the impression that my institution doesn't appreciate and utilize ethnic minorities because they have been good to me and for me. But, I think my minority status was misused as well as abused.

Annette is hurt and disappointed because she thought that she had been hired because of her qualifications, not because she filled a minority quota. Annette's hiring experience is consistent with other Black women who were hired by predominantly White colleges and universities to satisfy affirmative action mandates (Moses, 1997). Black women were often considered the ultimate hire because they satisfied the institution's need to hire members of targeted minority populations, and their race and gender fulfilled the requirements for two categories.

Iman, unlike Annette, knew during the interview process that she was being hired because of her minority status.

> I started at my institution fall 1993. The first year I was a temporary person, and fall 1994, I became a tenure track assistant professor. I knew that I'd been hired as a diversity appointment to expand the number of minorities in the department. As a result, I didn't go through the whole interview process. The reason they said was, "we know your record, and we need you to diversify the department."

I asked Iman if anyone had come right out in the open and said this to her, or was it simply implied. She looked at me with an incredible expression on her face, and said, "Yes they did. And it's hard because I know the department needs to be more diverse but it's like, can we use some tact here."

The administrators of Iman's department were correct in their assessment of her ability to succeed as a faculty member. She told me, "I knew I was qualified to be a faculty member

regardless to how I may have been hired." As far back as high school, she described herself as "a serious intellectual." However, by the administrators superseding the normal hiring procedures, the message is transmitted that her intellectual contribution is secondary to her racial identity, which is sometimes the perception held by White faculty of faculty of color in White institutions (Anderson & Sullivan, 1997; Fleming, et al., 1978). Turner et al. (1999) contended that White colleagues of faculty of color often "expect them to be less qualified or less likely to make significant contributions in research" (p. 31) because of the hiring procedures used to bring them into the institution (i.e., their departments).

As a result of Iman being a targeted hire to satisfy the departments' diversity requirement, no consideration was given to the cultural perspective or intellectual thought that she would bring to her new academic department. She said:

> While they technically expanded to have me in the department, I don't think there was a lot of consideration given for my personality. Nor do I think that there is a lot of expansion given for viewpoints that fall outside of the majority – the majority being White male in their early 50s. I'm glad to have been hired because I think it makes a difference for the students in the department. But the fact that I am the first non-White hire in my department since its existence says a lot about the department. And they don't seem to be aware of the implications of having been all White and mainly male.

Iman was hired for the purpose of filling a minority presence in the department. Therefore to the White male group in power she was a token Black woman, and as such, Iman was considered a "silent partner" in the department. The White males who inevitably would have had to approve her faculty appointment are the same men who would silence her if she attempted to interfere in how they planned to run the academic unit. As a token hire, Iman was expected to go along with the status quo.

Iman's employment at the university placed her in a paradoxical position. On the one hand, it is a significant accomplishment to be employed by a major Research I institution. People outside

of the university would have no idea that she was a targeted hire; therefore she would be recognized and respected by peers and colleagues outside of the institution as an up-and-coming tenure-track assistant professor. The paradox is two-fold: one, because Iman was a targeted hire, she may be viewed negatively by her department peers who would undoubtedly know how she was brought into the department. Moses (1997) contended that because of the special hiring considerations some African American women receive (i.e., affirmative action), they are generally "stereotyped, resented, [and] even treated with disrespect because they are perceived as less qualified" (p. 25) than their White colleagues. Two, how Iman is perceived and subsequently regarded by her White department colleagues could be significant to her professional and personal identity. If you recall, Iman felt alienated and isolated in high school because she was unable to establish peer relations with the White students in high school. When she discussed aspects of her college experience she said, "I was still very serious in college," which can be interpreted to mean that she still had a very limited peer group, if any, during her college experience. (See Holmes, 1999, for full report) If the lack of a connection to a peer group continues in her professional life, as it has in the personal, the isolation and alienation she experienced will be exacerbated. Thus, Iman will continue to retreat into herself, as she has in times past, which would not be healthy for her psychologically.

Split academic appointments and dual roles of African American women.

When I first started meeting with Annette I noticed that she sometimes appeared to be rushed and in a hurry. I finally asked her what was going on and why it appeared that she was often very busy.

> It's very overwhelming because my time is split in three pieces. I'm 50% in one place teaching, 40% in an administrative role working with college-bound minority students and their parents, and 10% on another special project. And it's tough because I have activities and assignments for all three of them. I also do research and that keeps me very

> busy; so you see, that's a full load. The good part about it is, part of my research comes from those areas, too.

Rather than spread the responsibilities for minority students across a broad number of people, including White faculty and administrators, the minority students have been channeled to the lone minority faculty member. Additionally, a number of the minority students Annette worked with were first-generation college students, which means that the level of assistance she will have to provide to them and their parents could be substantial because of their limited knowledge of entrance requirements. Second, the split appointment and dual roles that Annette is expected to perform negatively affected her in the tenure process.

Because of Annette's concentration on the service activity, she failed to meet the requirements needed for promotion and tenure.

> Doing so much service cost me negatively in my academic professional career when it came time for promotion. Although I've been here for a long time, I'm not tenured. My main area of deficiency, and I shouldn't say the word deficiency, but I deal with reality, was published research. It's been interesting because when I first arrived on campus, I felt as if I was the university's private documentation for minorities. I was on every committee, council, whatever, you name it. Many times I was the only Black person on the committee and a lot of times I was the only Black at the activities. I became a pioneer, sort of like an ethnic pioneer. So the service component of my professional life far exceeded the other components. But when it was time for my review, the research component became primary. So that's what got me. I was very disappointed because the university used me in the service area, but when I needed the university, they university didn't come through for me. I felt like I should have been tenured, because a person can't do everything, and the kinds of things I was doing, I should have been granted it, but the university said, "No." I will resubmit my portfolio again in the fall because I've done what was suggested.

Annette was in a catch-22. The institution needed the high level of service she provided (Moses, 1997). But they also expected her to maintain the same level of research and writing as her majority colleagues who probably did not provide the same level of assistance she provided to ethnic minority students on campus. Her indicating that she was involved in a lot of committee work and service activities is consistent with reports by other researchers who have noted that

African American women at predominantly White institutions are often encouraged to participate in a number of campus-wide service-type activities (Turner et al., 1999). The high visibility would have been beneficial to Annette's in some respects, but high visibility often leads to high levels of stress, as well as burnout and low levels of research productivity, which is precisely what happened to Annette.

It is ironic that in times past, Annette's and Iman's racial ethnicity would have been the very thing that kept them out of the academy; now it is the very reason both of these women were hired in their respective institutions (Fleming et al., 1978).

Black Administrator/White employees

Nakia is responsible for the student service division at her community college. Her position often brings her into contact with the general public who represents people from the predominantly White community where the college is located. In her academic role she supervisors a predominantly White professionals and clerical support personnel. Nakia described an incident she encountered in a meeting with a community person and a member of her White professional staff. The purpose of the meeting was to make preparation for an upcoming community-college event. Again, the bold is used to capture the emphasis placed on certain words.

> A discrepancy arose with two White women about the level of authority I had. It got to the point that the two of them started meeting before our meetings, then they'd come into the meeting and they would fight against me. In one meeting one of the women starting yelling at me, as if I was somebody she could give orders to. So I looked at her, and said, "Please lower your voice." I said, "We can discuss this without all of this," and she said, "WELL WHO DO YOU THINK YOU ARE?" And I said to her, "MY TITLE SAYS DIRECTOR." I've forgotten the exact issue that we were discussing, but you could see from her face that she was VERY, VERY ANGRY. And it was just because I was resisting what they wanted to do.

Nakia's experience with the two women described in this narrative clearly alludes to the

legacy of struggle that Collins (1990) indicates Black women encounter as a result of issues rooted in race and class privilege. The women were at odds with her because she is a Black woman, and had more authority to operate than they did. In addition to that, she would not concede her authority and become silent in the meetings to allow them to have their way in planning the event. While the literature is steadily growing regarding issues confronting African American and other women of color at predominantly White institutions, rarely does it address the issue of race relations between Black and White women in the academy (Amott & Matthaei, 1996; McKay, 1997; Mulqueen, 1992). Normally the perception is given that woman come in the academy, feminist women that is, for the sake of eradicating sexism in all of our lives. But Nakia's narrative indicates that there is reason for concern about how women of different ethnicities relate to each other in the workplace. Her narrative also dispels the myth of there being a presumed "sisterhood" out there that brings all women together, because it does not exist when race or class privilege is a factor (Davis, 1983; hooks, 1984; Wilson, 1989). With regard to the latter, hooks (1984) noted, "We are taught that our relationships with one another diminish rather than enrich our experiences. We are taught that women are "natural" enemies, that solidarity will never exist between us because we cannot, should not, and do not bond with one another" (p. 43).

How social class influences role supervision

Nakia's narrative also emphasizes how social class plays a role in shaping the relationship between Black and White women in the academy. The White woman thinking that it was permissible for them to speak to Nakia in that tone of voice, can be traced to how White women treated Black women during slavery (Bennett, 1993; hooks, 1981). Her specific words, "Who do you think you are?" meant, "I am a White woman, and therefore you as an African American

woman are beneath me in status; therefore, you should do as I say." Under the fallacy of the true cult of womanhood, some White women were idealized as being better than women of color (hooks, 1981; Lerner, 1981). And the fact that there were other people in the room when she displayed this unprofessional behavior is also consistent with history. White Americans' ill-treatment of Black women, and Black people in general, was never a private affair; it was often very public, because it heightened their desired sense of power and control (Collins, 1990; Davis, 1983; Wilson & Russell, 1996).

Contradictions in supervisory support

I asked Nakia how the incident was resolved, she said:

> The two women went to the dean and told him that I was being antagonistic and resistant, so we had a meeting with him. AND HE JUST SAT THERE WHILE THEY YELLED AT ME. HE JUST SAT THERE! And I said, "Now wait a minute, this is supposed to be an institution where professionals are, and I consider myself to be a professional. I do not like people raising their voices at me, and if we can't discuss this in a civil way, then I won't participate in the meeting." And the dean said, "WELL THAT'S YOUR JOB!" So I picked up my things and left, because I will not lower myself to yell the way they were yelling, or put myself on that level. The dean later called me in and said, "Well, I don't think that was very good of you to walk out like that." And I said, "I don't think it was very good for you to have sat there and allowed those two women to yell at me." In the end, the dean wanted to turn the event we had been planning over to someone else, and the campus provost said," "No, you can't do that because it is under her jurisdiction."

If any of the White persons who witnessed this incident were asked to interpret what had transpired in the meeting, they would not attribute it to race. It would undoubtedly be attributed to Nakia's assertive behavior, and not the fact that she is a Black woman with positional authority resisting the plans and ideas of White women. A reason for this is that a number of White Americans have lived from the vantage point of skin privilege that they often fail to consider race as a motivating factor of their actions; especially in a country that has historically discriminated against Black skin (Frankenberg, 1993; hooks, 1981).

Another point of interest is the calm demeanor Nakia maintains in the face of these difficult confrontations. And she does not appear to take it personally. It is as though acts of racism have become commonplace in her life, and she has built up a wall of resistance to keep the offenses from entering into her personal psychic. If you recall, as far back as undergraduate school when she had the encounter with the resident hall director when checking into the dorm, she did not lose her cool, per se.

Gender Politics

Iman is a tenure-track assistant professor in a virtually all-male department. She indicated that there are two other women who have close associations with the unit, but the White males dominant the faculty. Her relationship with her department colleagues is distant and she does not feel as though she has any department allies. Nakia, on the other hand, is an administrator who in her position interacts with a number of male colleagues who dominate the working environment. She, too, feels as though she does not have many allies and that her race and gender distance her from the men in the institution. Nakia believed that race and gender affect how her White male colleagues perceive her ability as a female administrator.

> I don't feel like the White males in the department respect me as female decision-maker. But I think that it's more than just me being a female, I think it's also that I'm a Black female decision-maker. It's like they think you have to be inferior to them. It's not like you can be on the same par [or] the same level, no matter if you both are at the same grade level. That's been my experience.

Nakia's narrative indicates that the perception held by White men of African American women and sexism have converged and impacted the type of work relations she has had with her White male colleagues. The White males viewing her as a deficient decision-maker because of her race and gender is not unusual; a number of administrative women have reported having similar experiences with White male colleagues in the academy (Kawewe, 1997; Moses, 1997).

Iman also had difficulty adjusting to the expectations of some of her senior-level male faculty regarding the role of female graduate students and junior female professors. She believed that they were expected to "play suck-up games to get ahead in the department."

> I think my experience in the department would be different if I played the cupie-doll role, or if I sucked-up to people. There 's another young woman I know who volunteered with her mentor's kids softball team. I like kids, but I'm not going to hand around a senior-level professor's kids to get close to them. My mind won't even allow me to go there. That's not how I want to be seen. I'd like to have friends in my department, but I'm not going to do any of that stuff to be someone's friend, or to get ahead.

Playing a demur female role for the sake of getting along with her male colleagues would contradict who Iman is within the construct of her identity. It would almost be as though she were a traitor to herself.

Why Black women resist game-playing in the academy

I thought it was interesting that Iman indicated that her mind would not allow her to entertain the possibility of playing gender games to get ahead in the department, and I asked her to elaborate.

> I think the legacy of what it means to be Black in America makes it difficult to play suck-up games with White Americans. I know people in my family who have done it for the sake of their children, to keep a job. It's like a sacrifice you make for something explicit, but inside you still have your pride. I feel like I need to maintain my self-respect because that is the one thing that keeps me going. I just can't see myself doing the baby-sitting or things like that [for my White senior-level colleagues]. And there are some things that echo so strongly within me that say, I will not play the Mammy role, or I will not play the Jezebel role to get ahead. I know what [some White] people think about Black women, and I will not allow myself to feed into their stereotypical images.

This narrative illustrates how race, class, and gender constructions have impacted the relationships of African and White Americans in higher education. Regardless of what the implication may be for not participating in the department's gender politics, Iman will not take part in perpetuating negative cultural images that have been created to devalue Black womanhood. The Jezebel and Mammy images were created to de-value Black women (hooks,

1981). The former represented a Black woman who was implied to be unable to control her sexual appetite. And the latter was designed to represent a Black woman who cared more for the needs of White families she worked for than she did her own. The latter also represented a supposedly asexual woman who nobody, particularly White men, wanted to couple with. Both images were created during slavery, and Black women have been trying to live above them in every sphere of our lives since (Collins, 1990; Lerner, 1981; Vaz, 1995). In terms of conceding to gender politics, it may be easier for some White women to play these types of games and still retain their self-respect, partially because the labels and images that were attached to their personification were much less denigrating than those for Black women (hooks, 1981).

For Iman, the primary issues are of self-valuation and self-respect. What you think of yourself is what will be portrayed to others, and it subsequently gives them license to treat you accordingly. The image Iman has of herself is that of a serious scholar, and that is how she desires to be perceived by her male colleagues. Furthermore, Iman indicated that she is conscious of what she does because, above all, she needs to maintain her self-respect. She indicated that it is the one thing that keeps her going. Collins (1990) indicated that in a society that regularly disrespects women, and Black women particularly, it would behoove all women to value and respect ourselves, and demand respect from others, men in particular. Iman believed that her academic contribution should be enough to earn the recognition of her colleagues in the department. Therefore, she chooses not to de-value herself in order to esteem anyone else.

Classroom Politics

Annette, Terah, and Iman are the only women in the study who come into regular contact with students in the classroom. Annette and Iman are assistant tenure-track professors at Research I universities, and Terah is an instructor at a comprehensive community college. Terah

indicated that her experiences with students have been very positive and rather non-descript. She said, " because of the intensity of the nursing program, students don't have time to get bogged down with issues related to me being a Black instructor. There just isn't time for that kind of stuff." Of the remaining two women, Iman has had the most notable experiences, probably because of her age being close to that of some of the students in her classes. The sub-categories are experiences of being a young Black female professor in a majority classroom, and feelings on being a Black professor in a White classroom environment.

Experiences Black female professor in a majority classroom

Iman discussed an experience she had with a White male student in one of her classes. The student appears to resent the fact that she is Black female in a position of authority over him.

> I found myself being challenged a couple times and it doesn't matter how diverse or homogenous the class is. I remember one student in particular, a White male. I think he didn't like women [because] so much of his stuff was ragging on women. Actually it was kind of scary because some of the things he said were way out there and degrading. And I think he felt freer to be more lippier and aggressive saying really what was on his mind because I was a young Black woman.

Iman's feelings regarding the male student in the classroom are shared by other women faculty in higher education. Bernice Sandler (1993) in Women Faculty at Work in the Classroom, or, Why It Stills Hurts To Be a Woman in Labor found that female faculty have experiences in the classroom with students that male faculty would never encounter. She found the experiences of the two faculty groups to be so diverse that, working in conjunction with Roberta M. Hall, she coined the term "chilly climate" to describe the overall negative experiences that some women have in academe. Sandler contended that male students in particular had difficulty with female professors because of the "anomaly of a woman having public authority. [And] the more male-dominated the discipline, the worse the problem is" (p. 5). Iman's problem is probably accentuated because she is a Black professor who is even more

an anomaly at a predominantly White institution.

Being a Black and female in a White classroom

Iman indicated that she is very conscious of herself as an African American faculty member on a predominantly White campus in the classroom.

> The race thing is always there. So, I have to be very careful of not jumping to conclusions about what students may think about me in my mind. Because there is a part of me that says, well, I guess this is what happens in a university that is whatever percent White. So, I try to hold off a bit because otherwise I would go into a fit, [and say] "Oh no, I'm stuck in this class with all of these conservative White kids." But I realize that that is also a part of the job that I do here, too.

What Iman is saying is that she struggles with trying to remain fair and consistent in her attitude toward the White students who sometimes challenge her right and authority as a professor, simply because she is Black. She recognizes that it is a part of her responsibility as an educator to engage students in viewing perspectives outside of what is comfortable and normal for them. And in some cases, that challenge is just her being at the head of the class.

Annette indicated she tries to bring race-related issues into the open to provide students with an opportunity to allow her to assist them in answering some of the questions they may have about African American people.

> I tell my classes that I know that some of them may not want to be in the class because I'm Black, and I let them know up front that I know that. But I say to them, this is your opportunity to pursue a number of things. So while you're in this class, you can throw anything at me professionally, and I will deal with it and professionally toss it back to you.

Annette's approach is more direct than Iman's in dealing with issues related to race, class, or gender. However, Annette is a more seasoned professional than Iman, and has developed confidence in her teaching role and herself.

Both of these narratives indicate the need for a diverse campus community. Not only does having faculty of color in predominantly White institutions benefit them, but it also enriches the

lives of majority students as well. Generally, majority college students are from majority social environments. College may be the first time any of them have an opportunity to encounter African Americans in face-to-face dialogue. By Annette creating a classroom environment where students may raise issues and concerns, some of the prevailing myths and stereotypes will undoubtedly be deconstructed, and hopefully destroyed.

Promotion and Tenure Review

Annette and Iman were the only women in the study in tenure-track positions. Terah will automatically gain tenure after four full years of employment at the community college where she is employed. Annette's experiences were emphasized in a previous section; below I discuss Iman's tenure review process.

Annual promotion and tenure review

At our third interview session, I noticed that Iman looked slightly upset, so I asked her if there was something wrong. She indicated that she had just had her yearly review.

> I just finished my review and it was very stressful. My teaching is considered fine, but I'm not getting the academic publishing done. I'm supposed to get a book published. That means I'll have to go further underground and just come up to teach my class, and may do a couple of other things. And I really feel angry that there are not more Black faculty because if there were, not just at the assistant professor level, but people with tenure, then if somebody like me wanted to just sit in their lab and work, they could.

Iman is upset because she feels that if she distances herself from the students in the department, there will be no other faculty of color available to assist them. This is a concern that has been stressed by other women of color in predominantly White institutions (Burgess, 1997). They feel a real or imagined sense of responsibility to the minority students at predominantly White colleges and universities. Moses (1997) indicated that African American women find it difficult to balance their competing obligations. She stated that because Black women tend to engage in more teaching and counseling of minority students on White college campuses than

their White counterparts, they sometimes do less research and write fewer publications than their White counterparts as well, which hurts them in the long run. Iman is frustrated because, having been a minority student on a majority campus, she realizes that minority students need to connect with minority faculty members. She indicated that she knew that she would have to make some decisions in the near future if she intends to remain in her current position.

> One thing that I was told during my yearly review was that I should cut back on the service. Cut it out completely. And I have mixed feelings about the recommendation to stop the service activities completely. Obviously they [White Americans in the department] don't feel that service to minority students is a necessary component of my faculty role. But, I think that the service is an important component of my appointment. And unless there is a final push [from the department administration] I'm not going to stop it. I am aware that I am making a choice here, and I don't intend to let my service activity cause me to fail. And I know the greater implication here is that I must decide whether or not I want tenure at all, because if I quit, I'm going to be taking myself out of academia.

Summary of Interview Findings

The narratives of the African American women in this study indicate that issues related to race, class, and gender played a significant role in shaping their academic experiences. It was apparent that some of the women had been hired by their institutions for reasons other than their intellectual capabilities. As a result, they were at a greater risk of not meeting their institutional expectations, as well as burdened with the responsibility of having to prove to colleagues, students, and others members of the institution that they were qualified for the positions they held. Some of the women were unable to develop mentoring relationships with senior colleagues, were often over-extended on committees assignments, experienced isolation, and received limited support when conflicts arose with White subordinates. Their experiences, particularly with their varying ages also indicate that the legacy of struggle does not discriminate against Black women, nor is it predicated on institutional type.

The narratives also indicate that while all of them had experiences predicated on race and

gender, how they interpreted and chose to respond to the experiences were very different for each woman. Terah and Nakia worked at the same comprehensive community college. Excerpts from Nakia's narratives (See Holmes, 1999 for a full discussion) indicate that for the most part, her experiences have not favorable at the institution. Terah, on the other hand, appears to have been able to crave out a comfortable space for herself. Many reasons could explain the disparity in their experiences at the same institution (e.g., age, family background, personal goals, etc.), which is as Collins (1990) indicated in the second dimension of her theoretical framework. Responses to core themes may vary for each Black women based on individual, environmental, and social perspectives.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

To explain the experiences of all African American women in predominantly white institutions of higher education is beyond the scope of any study. And while the women's narratives may provide insight into the academic experiences of other Black female faculty and administrators in similar settings, they should not be perceived to represent or explain the experiences of all African American women in predominantly White institutions. These are the experiences of the five women who participated in this study. Their stories may or may not represent experiences that you have encountered or fully understand, yet they are the realities of the women I interviewed as they presented them and as I perceived them.

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The impact of race on the women's academic experiences

Metaphorically, race appears to be the environmental landscape, the background canvas per se that the academic experiences of the African American women in this study were etched upon. If it is true, as Collins (1990) posited, that the experiences of African American women cannot

be understood separate from the historical and social contexts in which they live, then it stands to reason that the experiences of most Black women would have to be shaped and influenced by race relations in the United States; primarily because institutions of higher education are microcosms of the larger society, made up of members of the dominant majority and minority groups. Historically, members of the dominant majority were opposed to having African American people in general, and females more specifically, as members of the academy. The narratives revealed that some White Americans in higher education continue to create opposition that prevent the African American women faculty and administrators in the study from engaging freely in all areas of the academy. The academic experiences of the women in the study indicated that race is the most salient factor that shapes every experience that the women in this study had.

The impact of social class the women's academic experiences

The influence of social class in the lives of the women in the study was not as easily discernible as race; nevertheless it was present and contributed to how their academic experiences were shaped. In using the metaphor of race as the environmental landscape on which the experiences of the women were etched, social class status would be the subtle hues that color the experiences the women had.

Some of the women felt that social class issues occurred in their academic roles in two very distinct ways. First, it was evident in the perceptions held by their White colleagues or people they interacted with in performing their academic roles. In this instance, the women felt that their colleagues treated them as though they were less qualified and/or inferior to their White male and female counterparts simply because they were African American. This finding was consistent with numerous reports from other African American women in similar settings (Etter-

Lewis, 1993; Kawewe, 1997; Thompson & Dey, 1998).

Second, some of the women struggled with being members of the new middle class, having left their respective Black communities for employment and lifestyles perceived widely to be indicative of middle-class White Americans. Here they dealt with psychological issues, which could explain why some of them remained in predominantly White institutions at the risk of great mental stress. Annette indicated:

> I got a lot of flak from members of my family, members of the extended family, and even friends because I did not go back home after I finished college. And it has been a hard thing to deal with. There were those who said, "You should have come back [to the Black community] because you were sent to prepare yourself to come back and help the others." But, there were also those who said, "We knew that because of the different kinds of experiences you were going to have, that you would not come back."

Annette indicated that these issues precipitated the level of service that she had provided to African American and other minority students at her institution.

> This has been a motivation for my work with minority students. Don't misunderstand me, I love all students. But because I relate so to African Americans, I want to make certain that they know they have someone at the university they can relate to. Primarily my work on campus has involved issues regarding civil rights, diversity, and multiculturalism because I've always felt I went to college to get a degree to go back home, and I didn't go back. So, it makes me feel like I really am giving back to the African American community.

These findings suggest that some African American women at predominantly White colleges and universities may experience stress in performing their academic roles because of social class issues rooted in their separation from the Black community.

The impact of gender in the women's academic experiences

Because of the long history of various forms of discrimination in America against African American women particularly, it is virtually impossible to conceive that traces of deep-rooted sexist ideologies do not permeate institutions of higher education. Continuing the metaphor, African American women in predominantly White institutions are often viewed as charcoal

caricatures incapable of making a serious contribution – inaudible, voiceless, silent. The perceptions held by the women in this study indicated that White males in authority discounted their service contributions to minority students, took advantage of their minority status when it was convenient, and viewed them as less competent than other members in the academy. In Research I institutions, promotion and tenure are based upon research, writing, and service. For African American women in White institutions, service is a large component of their activities. Yet, it is held against them when they are reviewed for promotion (Moses, 1997). In other instances, the women were hired by their institutions because they satisfied diversity hiring needs in the department, not because of the intellectual contribution that they would make to the university (Turner et al., 1999). By being Black and female, the women in the study represented a two-for-one hire for their academic departments and administrative units. As such, the women were not recognized by White male power-brokers as having a credible role in the department, and in some cases were seen as voiceless participants (Collins, 1990). These findings suggest that the roles played by some African Americans in higher education are only figurative.

How race, class, and gender intersect to influence the women's academic roles

The experiences of the African American women in this study have indicated that race, class, and gender sometimes operated independently, and at other times, collectively, to shape and influence the academic experiences of the women in the study. Of the three constructs, race and gender were most paramount in shaping their experiences. How social class operated was the least noticeable and prevalent of the trilogy, but we would be remiss to believe that it, too, did not have some influence in shaping their experiences, particularly when one considers the relationship that many Black and White Americans have had over the years in other social and institutional settings.

The manifestation of how the constructs operated was largely dependent upon the circumstance or particular situation. For example, Annette and Iman being hired in their academic departments to fulfill diversity requirements was clearly predicated on race, and perhaps gender as well. And then race and gender intersected to influence the experiences that Iman and Nakia had with their respective White male colleagues. Some of the experiences that Iman had with the White males in her department can be attributed to how she was hired, but gender differences were also the salient reason that she was unable to establish peer relations with the male group. On the other hand, Nakia's decision-making ability was questioned because her White male colleagues did not perceive her, as a Black female, as being as competent and capable as they were in making decisions at the institution.

This research was undertaken in an effort to understand if or how the constructs of race, social class status, and gender influenced the academic experiences of the African American women in this study. The implications of the study include the following:

Recommendations for future research

- African American women faculty and administrators at selected Research I universities and comprehensive community colleges were the focus of this study. It would be helpful if additional research were conducted with women employed at historically Black and private institutions to determine if the experiences are similar for women across institutional types. For example, at historically Black institutions do women just encounter sexism, or does racism also shape the experiences of some African American women, particularly when consideration is given to the differences that are made in the Black community with regard to people of varying degrees of skin tone? Equally important in studying African American women at historically Black institutions would be how social class affects the women's

experiences, particularly when consideration is given to how some African Americans who have achieved middle-class status (i.e., senior-level administrators and faculty) perceive other African Americans in the academy.

- The narratives of the African American women in this study indicated that they perceived that their White colleagues considered them as less creditable than themselves because of how they were hired by their academic departments. However, the voices of White faculty and administrators have not been heard. It would be helpful in future research if interviews were conducted with selected White colleagues of African American women faculty and administrators to understand precisely what their concerns are regarding their Black female counterparts.
- For faculty in higher education, promotion and tenure are the lifeblood of the academy. Women in this study had serious concerns and experienced considerable stress as a result of the tenure process and the expectations placed upon them by their academic departments. Naturally, because of its significance, achieving tenure is generally a stressful event in anyone's academic career. However, additional layers of stress may be added to the experiences of African American women in predominantly White institutions because of issues related to race, class, and gender. To more fully understand the process that tenure-track African American faculty undergo additional research is needed to examine how they matriculate and manage the tenure process. Special emphasis could be placed upon the women's pre- and post-tenure experiences. This would be helpful because it may reveal impediments created by both the women and the institution during this often-stressful experience.

Recommendations for predominantly White institutions

- The narratives of the women in this study indicated that their respective predominantly White institutions relied heavily upon the services of Black faculty and administrators in assisting minority students in adapting to their campus environment. It would appear that more emphasis should be placed upon involving White faculty and administrators in mentoring minority students. Generally, when minority students attend predominantly White institutions they are from minority-specific environments. Hence the social nuances they may need to succeed in the world beyond college may be supplemented best from their engagement with White professionals. This recommendation does not negate the significant contribution professionals of color at White institutions make to minority students; rather it suggests that both groups are equally needed to prepare the future leaders of society.
- There is often considerable discussion regarding the need to create more inclusive campus communities. Inclusive means that everyone is welcomed in the academy and differences are anticipated and embraced. However, the narratives of the women in this study indicated that they did not feel as though a "free" space was made available in the academy to allow for their individual personalities. They felt as though they were expected to fit into an already carved space that was designed primarily to house a male member of the majority group. To assist African American women in becoming full participants in their academic departments and the community in general, department chairs and senior-level administrators may need to develop support programs for faculty of color. Support could be structured in the form of department and college-wide mentors, professional development opportunities, and community support groups to help the women in establishing professional as well as personal peer relations.
- Administrators of predominantly White institutions must increase the number of African

American women faculty and administrators at these institutions. Increased numbers will not only allow faculty who are more inclined toward research and writing to produce scholarship necessary for promotion and tenure, but it will also allow faculty inclined more toward teaching to have that freedom as well.

Recommendations for African American Women

- African American women must have a clearer understanding of how they will be measured for promotion and tenure before they engage in significant levels of service activity that, while needed, will generally not result in their being promoted or tenured. If the information is not readily forthcoming, it should be requested early in the employment process.
- African American women will need to develop strong survival skills if they are to remain psychologically and physically healthy as members of predominantly White institutions. The women in this study used various forms of therapy to manage the stress (e.g., religion, counseling, exercise, etc.) associated with being Black and female in White institutions. Ultimately, the method used is immaterial; rather having a plan in place is more important because the narratives indicated that it was easy for some of the women to become consumed by the events that transpired and the expectations involved in fulfilling their academic roles. For single women in particular, there is a significant risk of allowing the professional identity to supersede all aspects of their personal identity, primarily because there may be no one who will continuously draw their attention away from the academy. Therefore, it may be crucial to establish personal relationships with members outside of the academy who provide needed reality checks.
- African American women must have realistic expectations about employment at predominantly White institutions. The women's narratives in this study, as well as other narratives from extant

literature, have indicated that in some instances Black women will need to work harder than their White counterparts to prove themselves as viable and competent professors and administrators in White institutions. If they know this prior to employment, then the impact of some of the experiences will be minimized because they will be anticipated events.

- Some African American women will need to be more aggressive than others in seeking support networks in their universities. If support is not available in the immediate department or division, it may be necessary to look for other individuals throughout the academy community who will assist them in meeting their personal and professional needs. This may mean that some African American women will need to be more open to establishing relationships with individuals outside of the Black community.
- Because some predominantly White institutions are comprised of people in society who may have unfavorable perceptions and stereotypical images of African American women, it is important that Black women in these institutions have a strong sense of their self-worth and ability because validation may not be forthcoming in the academy.
- African American women should make a practice of keeping a log and/or tenure file over the course of their employment documenting service requested by members of the academic community to be presented as a component of their professional activities in their tenure portfolio.
- Women in general may not be inclined or accustomed to publicizing their accomplishments. African American women in particular may feel uncomfortable because they perceive publicizing their talents, skills, and academic accomplishments as being boastful and arrogant. But a method is needed wherein publications and achievements are shared with the academic community because it will dispel the perception that Black women are incapable of producing

creditable scholarship.

It was a pleasure interacting with all of the women who participated in this study. But this research was a very difficult undertaking for all of us involved. As I reflect upon the findings of the study that unfortunately supported extant literature, I am saddened and embarrassed that today, as an intellectual community, we are still wrestling with many of the same issues that were paramount in higher education many years ago. At the writing of this thesis, as a society of people, we are less than 120 days away from the new millennium. And at this point in history, people of African descent are more than 130 years beyond the January 1, 1863 signing of the Emancipation Proclamation. But today, in one of the most powerful and industrialized nations on the face of the earth, Black and White Americans are still contending with racial issues in the United States. But I have hope and am encouraged that the advances that have been made in times past will continue to propel us forward as a society of people and a community of scholars. I close this study with a quote I found in a compilation of speeches made by the late Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr. (King, 1984). Dr. King's words eloquently expressed my feelings after having conducted this research, "There is little hope for us until we become tough-minded enough to break loose from the shackles of prejudice, half-truths, and downright ignorance" (p. 30).

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